

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9885

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 3181

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS CINCPAC FOR ADMIRAL GAYLER AND POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, KS, KN

SUBJ: DEFENSE MINISTER OUTLINES ROK MISSILE PLANS

REF: SEOUL 3090

SUMMARY: DEFENSE MINISTER SUH EMPHASIZES THAT LOCKHEED PROPELLANT PLANT IS NECESSARY FOR MISSILE MAINTENANCE; AS FOR ROK LONG-TERM MISSILE PLANS THEY ARE UNDECIDED, BUT MINISTER SEES MERIT IN JOINT STUDY. WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD PROVIDE PROPELLANT PLANT UNDER CONDITIONS AND AT SAME TIME SEEK AGREEMENT WITH ROKGS ON JOINT STUDY OF FUTURE REQUIREMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN PROMISED FOLLOW-UP TO MY CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT PAK ABOUT ROK MISSILE PLANS (REFTEL), DEFENSE MINISTER SUH MAY 2 JOINED BY AGENCY FOR DEFENSE DEVELOPMENT VICE PRESIDENT HYUN KYUNG-HO GAVE ME BROAD OVERVIEW OF MISSILE PROGRAM, EMPHASIZING THAT ROKG HAD TWO BASIC OBJECTIVES: (1) AN IN-COUNTRY CAPABILITY FOR MISSILE MAINTENANCE AND (2) CAPABILITY TO DETER ENEMY MISSILE THREAT.

2. SUH NOTED THAT, WITHOUT IN-COUNTRY MAINTENANCE FACILITY WHICH INCLUDED PROPELLANT PRODUCTION, ROKG INVENTORY OF NIKE HERCULES AND HAWK MISSILES WOULD BECOME
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USELESS WHEN US SUPPORT NO LONGER AVAILABLE. SO FAR U.S. HAD TAKEN CARE OF MAINTENANCE, BUT THIS CHORE WOULD OF NECESSITY SHORTLY BECOME KOREAN RESPONSIBILITY. TWO SIDES HAD NOW TALKED ABOUT MAINTENANCE QUESTION FOR ONE

AND ONE-HALF YEARS AND IT WAS TIME FOR ACTION. RESPONDING AT ONE POINT TO MY SUGGESTION THAT EXPERTS JOINTLY STUDY ROK MISSILE PLANS, MINISTER SAID IMMEDIATE NEED WAS FOR U.S. DECISION ON POLITICAL PLANE REGARDING LOCKHEED PROPELLANT PLANT WHICH WAS INTEGRAL PART OF REQUIRED MAINTENANCE CAPABILITY. SUH INDICATED DURING DISCUSSION AND UNDERLINED DURING SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION AT EVENING RECEPTION THAT MAINTENANCE OBJECTIVE AND PROPELLANT PLANT DECISION UPPERMOST IN HIS MIND.

3. AS FOR SECOND OBJECTIVE OF MISSILE PROGRAM, DEVELOPMENT OF DETERRENT TO DPRK MISSILE THREAT, SUH INDICATED THIS WAS OBVIOUSLY MUCH LONGER TERM PROPOSITION, NEEDING FURTHER REFINEMENT. OUTLINING HIS OWN CONCEPT OF THIS OBJECTIVE, MND EMPHASIZED NEED FOR COUNTER BATTERY MISSILE CAPABILITY TO KNOCK OUT ENEMY'S FROG 7 MISSILES, TO PROTECT SEOUL, AND TO COUNTER ARTILLERY ATTACK ON COASTAL ISLANDS, RATHER THAN CAPABILITY TO KNOCK OUT ENEMY AIRFIELDS EMPHASIZED BY PRESIDENT. IN FACT SUH INDICATED SOME SURPRISE WHEN I MENTIONED PRESIDENT PAK'S ANTI-AIRFIELD MISSILE STRATEGY AND LOOKED QUESTIONINGLY AT ADD VICE PRESIDENT HYUN, WHO AT THIS POINT LOOKED VERY UNCOMFORTABLE. AT ANOTHER POINT IN DISCUSSION HYUN DID AMPLIFY SECOND OBJECTIVE SOMEWHAT MORE, SAYING BASIC REQUIREMENT WAS FOR TACTICAL ROCKETS AND MISSILES AS COUNTERMEASURE TO NORTHERN THREAT. HIGH EXPLOSIVE OR ICM WARHEADS AND SIMPLE GUIDANCE SYSTEMS WOULD BE REQUIRED. THERE WAS NO MENTION AT ANY POINT BY EITHER SUH OR HYUN OF IN-COUNTRY PRODUCTION CAPABILITY.

4. IN MY RESPONSES TO MINISTER'S REMARKS I STRESSED ESSENTIALLY TWO POINTS. FIRST, MISSILE MAINTENANCE CAPABILITY APPEARED TO BE LEGITIMATE AND IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT MERITING OUR EARLIEST ATTENTION; INDEED WE
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HAVE ALREADY GIVEN SUPPORT TO MISSILE MAINTENANCE DEPORT. SECOND, HOLD-UP ON MISSILE MAINTENANCE AND SPECIFICALLY LOCKHEED PLANT HAD ARISEN BECAUSE WE WERE UNCLEAR ABOUT ROK'S LONGER RANGE PURPOSES AND WERE CONCERNED THAT SUCH PROJECTS AS LOCKHEED PLANT COULD BE GEARED NOT ONLY TO MAINTENANCE BUT SUPPORTING LONG-RANGE STRATEGIES, WHICH MIGHT NOT BE COST EFFECTIVE, WHICH MIGHT ENCOURAGE COUNTER MOVES SUCH AS SCUD ACQUISITION BY NORTH KOREA, AND WHICH ALSO MIGHT NOT BE IN U.S. OR KOREAN INTEREST. IT WOULD BE NECESSARY I SAID TO SEPARATE MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENT FROM LONGER RANGE REQUIREMENTS WHICH CALLED FOR FURTHER MUTUAL STUDY. WHILE MND SAW MERIT IN THIS LATTER PROPOSAL AT SOME

FUTURE DATE, HE INSISTED THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION ON
NEED FOR POSITIVE EARLY ACTION ON MAINTENANCE
REQUIREMENT BEFORE WE COULD MOVE AHEAD WITH MUTUAL
STUDY OF MISSILE REQUIREMENTS TO REACH ROK'S SECOND,
LONGER RANGE OBJECTIVE.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 3181

EXDIS

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5. COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS: I BELIEVE THIS
CONVERSATION PROVIDES ACCEPTABLE FRAMEWORK FOR
WORKING TOGETHER WITH ROKS ON FUTURE MISSILE
REQUIREMENTS. FIRST STEP IS TO APPROVE PROPELLANT
PLANT TO ROUND OUT ROK MISSILE MAINTENANCE
CAPABILITY AND AS SUPPORT FOR ELEMENTARY TESTING
ADD HAS ALREADY INITIATED ON SMALL SOUNDING
ROCKETS. THIS APPEARS JUSTIFIABLE. WE HAVE ALREADY
APPROVED CONCEPT OF IN-COUNTRY MISSILE MAINTENANCE
FOR HAWK AND NIKE HERCULES AND INITIAL FUNDING OF
\$1.4 MILLION FMS CREDIT FROM FY 74 FUNDS. OUR
RECORDS INDICATE THAT THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL NEED
AND THAT IT WOULD BE COST EFFECTIVE TO REPLACE HAWK
AND NIKE HERCULES MOTORS IN-COUNTRY. BASED ON CURRENT
ROK ASSETS THERE WILL BE AVERAGE OF 60 HAWK AND NIKE
HERC MOTORS PER YEAR TO BE DONE FROM 1977 ONWARDS AND
APPROXIMATE \$5 MILLION COST FOR PROPELLANT PLANT DOES
NOT SEEM UNREASONABLE FOR THIS JOB. LOADING WORKLOAD
WILL INCREASE FURTHER AS RESULT OF PLANNED TRANSFER
OF U.S. AIR FORCE ASSETS TO ROK. RECENT ARRANGEMENTS
FOR MISSILE MAINTENANCE INVOLVE COSTLY SHIPMENT TO US.
HOWEVER, BASIC HAWK AND NIKE HERC ARE NOT LIKELY TO
BE SUPPORTABLE BY U.S. ARMY OVER EXTENDED PERIOD, AND
ROKS HAVE THEREFORE UNDERSTANDABLE AND LEGITIMATE NEED
TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT IN THIS RESPECT. LOCKHEED
PROPELLANT PLANT IS ESSENTIAL TO MEETING THIS REQUIREMENT.

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6. BEYOND ABOVE JUSTIFICATION KEY QUESTION IS WHETHER KOREANS WILL USE PROPELLANT PLANT FOR OTHER MISSILE OBJECTIVES NOT IN U.S. INTEREST. CONVERSATION WITH SUH INDICATED CONSIDERABLE LACK OF CLARITY OR AGREEMENT IN ROKG ON EITHER APPROPRIATE USE OF MISSILES OR ON DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTION CAPABILITY. MND IS FOCUSED ON IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR MAINTENANCE AND ADD, WITH SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT PAK, HAS MORE GRANDIOSE LONGER-TERM PLANS.

7. MY CONCLUSION FROM ALL THIS IS THAT WE SHOULD ATTEMPT TO STRIKE DEAL WITH KOREANS WHEREIN WE WOULD APPROVE LOCKHEED PROPELLANT PLANT SALE WITH RESTRICTIONS ON ITS USE FOR MAINTENANCE AND CURRENT ELEMENTARY MISSILE EXPERIMENTATION. FURTHER USES WOULD BE BASED ON MUTUAL AGREEMENT ON MISSILES STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT. FOR THIS PURPOSE, IN CONNECTION WITH OUR CURRENT POLICY REVIEW WE PROPOSE BRING OUT TEAM OF MISSILE EXPERTS TO REVIEW STRATEGIC USES OF MISSILES AND HELP ROKS WORK OUT COST EFFECTIVE PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD BE IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST. SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD NOT ONLY PROVIDE ROKS WITH SPECIFIC HARDWARE THEY NOW MOST WANT FROM US; IT WOULD ALSO COMPRISE CONVINCING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FROM US AT TIME THERE IS CLEAR NEED FOR THIS. IT WOULD GIVE US OPPORTUNITY TO FLUSH OUT ADD'S MORE AMBITIOUS PLANS AND WOULD PROVIDE US LONG-TERM INSURANCE THAT ROKS WOULD NOT GO OFF ON THEIR OWN IN DIRECTIONS NOT IN U.S. INTEREST IN THIS CRITICAL AREA OF DEVELOPMENT. TO THE CONTRARY, THEIR NEED FOR ASSISTANCE IS SO EVIDENT I BELIEVE ROKS WOULD DEPEND HEAVILY ON OUR ADVICE.

8. ADVANCE STATE OF MISSILE MAINTENANCE PLANNING, URGENCY ROKS ATTACH TO THIS QUESTION, AND BROADER ROK

NEEDS AT THIS TIME FOR POSITIVE DECISIONS IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE FIELDS ALL ARGUE FOR EARLIEST POSSIBLE DECISION ON PROPELLANT PLANT. AS FOR LONGER TERM PLANNING I SHOULD THINK IT WOULD PROVE FEASIBLE TO HOLD EXPERT DISCUSSIONS SOON ENOUGH SO THAT DECISIONS

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COULD BE REACHED AS BASIS FOR DISCUSSION ON FUTURE COURSE OF MISSILE DEVELOPMENT AT SECURITY CONSULTATIVE MEETING IN SEPTEMBER.
SNEIDER

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